

Message Text

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EXDIS

USUN FOR AMB. YOUNG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFORAN PINT, SHUM, TO
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: PRESIDENT EYADEMA HANDLES DETAINEES IN
RECENT "POLITICAL TRACTS" CASE WITH APPARENT DEFTNESS

REF: LOME 1049,

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN KODJO ON JUNE 6, I BRIEFED HIM GENERALLY ON THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE RECENT AFRICAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING AT ABIDJAN. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD A NUMBER OF INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH WASHINGTON PARTICIPANTS IN WHICH FAVORABLE MENTION HAD BEEN MADE OF PRESIDENT EYADEMA'S EFFORTS TO SEE THAT PERSONS WHO MIGHT BE TERMED POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE RELEASED FROM DETENTION (REF). KODJO WAS PLEASED BUT ASKED WHAT WASHINGTON'S REACTION HAD BEEN TO THE RECENT WAVE OF ARRESTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DISTRIBUTION OF "POLITICAL TRACTS" (LOME 1345). I SAID THESE ARRESTS HAD, OF COURSE, BEEN REPORTED, ALONG WITH THE FACT THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE PERSONS DETAINED OR INTERROGATED HAD APPARENTLY BEEN RELEASED. KODJO CONFIRMED THAT THE NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERROGATED HAD BEEN ABOUT TWO HUNDRED BUT THAT ONLY FOUR REMAINED UNDER DETENTION.3

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LOME 01507 071848Z

WM HE REVIEWED THE BACKGROUND OF THE CASE AND SAID IT PRESENTED PERPLEXING PROBLEMS. AFTER DISCOVERY OF ANTI-REGIME AND ANTI-EYADEMA TRACTS IN A VALISE CARRIED BY A STUDENT WHO HAD TRAVELED FROM FRANCE TO TOGO, TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES WERE ABLE TO ROLL UP THE DISTRIBUTION NET AND FINALLY TO ISOLATE THE FOUR OR FIVE PERSONS WHO WERE THE LEADERS IN THIS ACTIVITY. GOT WAS CONCERNED THOUGH THAT THE LATTER GROUP WAS COMPOSED OF

IMPORTANT PEOPLE, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS. THE MOST DISQUIETING ASPECT OF THE AFFAIR, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THE GROUP IN TOGO, IN ASSOCIATION WITH A FRANCE-BASED GROUP OF TOGOLESE, CALLED ITSELF THE ALLIANCE OF TOGOLESE MARXISTS. (ATM) AND THE LOCAL LEADERS HAD ADMITTED THAT THEIR INTENTION HAD BEEN TO INFILTRATE THE NATIONAL PARTY, THE RASSEMBLEMENT DU PEUPLE TOGOLAISE (RPT), WITH THE EVENTUAL INTENTION OF OVERTHROWING THE EYADEMA GOVERNMENT.

3. I SAID I HAD HEARD THERE HAD BEEN A RECENT MEETING OF THE RPT AT WHICH THE FOUR DETAINEES HAD MADE A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF THEIR ACTIVITIES TO PARTY AND GOVERNMENT CADRES. I ASKED WHETHER THIS HAD BEEN A SORT OF TRIAL AND WHETHER THE CONFESSION WOULD SUFFICE OR WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTEMPLATING BRINGING LEGAL CHARGES AGAINST THE DETAINEES. KODJO SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN PLEAS FOR CLEMENCY TOWARD THE PRISONERS AT THE MEETING IN QUESTION. HE SAID HE THOUGHT EYADEMA INTENDED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A TRIAL AT WHICH TIME SPECIFIC CHARGES WOULD BE BROUGHT AGAINST THE FOUR DETAINEES. ACCORDING TO KODJO, THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS THAT THEY ARE CHARGED WITH SUBVERSION WHICH CARRIES GRAVE PENALTIES; HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE COOPERATED WELL WITH THE INVESTIGATING AGENCIES AND THE FACT THAT EYADEMA WISHES TO AVOID EXACERBATING THE AFFAIR MIGHT ARGUE FOR TRIAL ON A CHARGE LESS SERIOUS THAN SUBVERSION.

4. KODJO SAID THAT NO ONE TOOK THE ALLEGTD MARXIST NATURE OF THE GROUP TOO SERIOUSLY AT THIS POINT BUT THE FACT THAT THE ORGANIZATION CALLED ITSELF MARXIST WAS A POLITICAL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LOME 01507 071848Z

MISTAKE BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT HAD A GOOD DEAL OF SUPPORT FROM INFLUENTIAL GROUPS IN TRYING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS AFFAIR AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. KODJO SAID THAT AWARE TOGOLESE ARE FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MARXISM REQUIRES LENINISM AND STALINISM, NONE OF WHICH THEY WISH TO SEE INSTALLED HERE.

5. COMMENT: OTHER EMBASSY CONTACTS SUPPORT KODJO IN HIS VIEW THAT EYADEMA IS GIVEN GOOD MARKS FOR HANDLING THIS AFFAIR WITH DISCRETION AND SOPHISTICATION. AS FAR AS THE EMBASSY IS ABLE TO TELL, INTERROGATIONS WERE PROPERLY CONDUCTED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF VIOLENCE AND MISHANDLING OF DETAINEES. THE ADDITION OF THE MARXIST ELEMENT HAS APPARENTLY STRENGTHENED THE GOVERNMENT'S CASE AGAINST THE ACCUSED. FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS POINT OF VIEW, EYADEMA APPEARS TO BE HANDLING THIS CASE TOLERABLY WELL. (FYI: SEVERAL UPPER VOLTAN STUDENTS WERE INVOLVED IN THE LOCAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PAMPHLETS. THEY HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO TAKE THEIR EXAMINATIONS AND WILL BE DEPORTED THEREAFTER).

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